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COMMENTS OF

COMMISSIONER LAUREN MCDONALD
GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
BEFORE THE
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
GEOLOGIC REPOSITORY AT YUCCA MOUNTAIN, NEVADA

Public Hearing
October 21, 1999
Atlanta, Georgia

Good afternoon, I am Commissioner Lauren McDonald, otherwise known as "Bubba", of Georgia. I'm one of five elected Public Service Commissioners whose responsibility it is to protect the interests of Georgia's electricity ratepayers. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the state of Georgia as well as our national organization, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners where I serve on the Electricity Committee.

Georgia has two nuclear plants – Plant Vogtle near Augusta, Georgia and Plant Hatch in Baxley, Georgia - for which electricity ratepayers have contributed over half a billion dollars since 1983 to the Nuclear Waste Fund to finance the removal of spent nuclear fuel produced by the plants and our share of the cost of developing the Yucca Mountain repository. We, at the

Commission, allowed our utilities to collect these funds with the guarantee from the Federal government that as of January 1998 a permanent storage facility would be in place to begin to accept the waste. As we are all aware, the repository has not been built, ratepayers continue to contribute to this fund and there is no date certain of when it will be built and ready.

1

DOE's breach of the Standard Contract has imposed significant risk and harm on ratepayers in many states. In Georgia, for example, ratepayers continue to pay, not just for the payments that the utilities have made into the Nuclear Waste Fund but, also for the emergency measures that had to be taken as a result of DOE's non-performance. The utilities, through Southern Nuclear Company as owner and operator of the nuclear plants, have incurred costs both for the construction of a dry cask storage facility for spent nuclear fuel at its Plant Hatch site and as part of a joint utility corporation, Private Fuel Storage LLC, to provide for the temporary storage of spent nuclear fuel. The budgeted cost through 2002 for the Plant Hatch dry cask facility is \$27.5 million. In addition, through 1998, Southern Nuclear incurred \$3.8 million for activities associated with the Private Fuel Storage LLC site. At Plant Vogtle, additional spent fuel pool rack capacity was completed in December 1998 at a total project cost of approximately \$2.6 million. Some

of the costs are subject to recovery through base rates, while the Company will seek to recover other costs through its fuel rider. Under either method, significant costs resulting from DOE's non-performance under the standard contract will be passed on to ratepayers.

2

Our State did not envision nor did it conduct studies on the possibility of long-term storage of nuclear waste at the plant sites. Although, we are not technical experts and, therefore, are not here to address the specifics of the draft environmental impact statement, we feel an urgency in getting the permanent repository constructed and ready to accept the nuclear plants' waste because of the impact this delay is having on our ratepayers

We urge you to seriously consider our comments and to move expeditiously on building the repository now and not in the distant future. Again, the State of Georgia should not become a temporary nor permanent storage ground for nuclear waste. This prospect is untenable and totally unacceptable.

We thank you for allowing us this time to express our concerns on this very critical issue that our entire nation faces today. If we can be of any assistance, please let us know.